

Testimony in Support of

HB 5029, AAC Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence on Campus

Member Agencies

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
February 11, 2014

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
Ansonia, CT

The Center for Women & Families
Bridgeport, CT

Women's Center
Danbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program United Services
Dayville, CT

Network Against Domestic Abuse
Enfield, CT

Domestic Abuse Services Greenwich YWCA
Greenwich, CT

Interval House
Hartford, CT

Meriden-Wallingford Chrysalis
Meriden, CT

New Horizons
Middletown, CT

Prudence Crandall Center
New Britain, CT

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services
New Haven, CT

Safe Futures
New London, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Norwalk, CT

Women's Support Services
Sharon, CT

Domestic Violence Crisis Center
Stamford, CT

Susan B. Anthony Project
Torrington, CT

Safe Haven
Waterbury, CT

Domestic Violence Program United Services
Willimantic, CT

Good morning Senator Cassano, Representative Willis and members of the committee. My name is Liza Andrews and I am the Communications & Public Policy Specialist for CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV). CCADV is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those agencies that serve them. Our members provide essential services to over 56,000 victims of domestic violence, such as 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We urge your support of HB 5029 with a few suggestions for substitute language that will allow for the participation of domestic violence providers in helping college campuses address intimate partner violence (IPV), which is a form of domestic violence.

We commend legislators for this proposal, which creates a number of critical policies that mirror federal law and will help Connecticut college campuses address IPV. One important change will be to require institutions of higher learning to report every incident of sexual assault and IPV reported to state police, local police, campus police or campus security, including those incidents that occur off campus. Such a reporting requirement will lead to concrete data that can assist policymakers to more fully understand and address this issue.

The bill will also require institutions of higher learning to provide concise information, written in plain language, detailing the rights of sexual assault and IPV victims. It also gives colleges the option of creating an anonymous reporting mechanism for victims. These are both important steps to ensuring that victims can address violence on their own terms.

Section 3 of the bill requires institutions of higher education to establish a trained sexual assault response team for each campus. This will be a vital step to having trained professionals available to address violence on campus. After receiving comprehensive training, the response teams will "develop protocols for providing support and services to any student or employee who reports being the victim of sexual assault or *intimate partner violence*." As such, **we respectfully request that you consider the following additions to allow for the participation of domestic violence agencies:**

- **Line 168** – add "and intimate partner violence" after "assault" – this will result in a name change of the sexual assault response team to the *Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Response Team* since the bill calls for the team to respond to both sexual assault and IPV.

The following lines also address the title of the response team:

- **Line 169** – add "and intimate partner violence" after "assault"
- **Line 181** - add "and intimate partner violence" after "assault"
- **Line 192** - add "and intimate partner violence" after "assault"
- **Line 199** - add "and intimate partner violence" after "assault"
- **Line 217** - add "and intimate partner violence" after "assault"

- **Line 176 – add a new subdivision (3) that includes “a community-based domestic violence agency”** and renumber the remaining subdivisions – this will include the local domestic violence agency on the Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Response Team as the local domestic violence agency is the only agency with the expertise and government funding to address IPV that either does not encompass or goes beyond sexual assault.
- **Line 191 – add “and domestic violence” after “assault”** – this ensures that the role of local domestic violence advocates will also be explained to members of the Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence Response Team as the local domestic violence advocate will be the best resource for working with IPV victims.

Section 3 of the bill states that the response team will receive training regarding a “victim-centered response.” We believe it is important to define what this means. As such, **we respectfully request that you consider adding the following definition to Section 2 of the bill:**

“Victim-centered response” means the systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim of sexual assault or intimate partner violence that (A) ensures the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner, (B) ensures an understanding of how victim trauma affects victim behavior, (C) maintains victim safety, privacy and confidentiality, and (D) recognizes that victims are never responsible for the crimes committed against them and that offenders are always responsible for their crimes.

Section 4 of the bill creates an MOU between institutions of higher education and at least one community-based sexual assault crisis service center to ensure that “any victim of sexual assault or intimate partner violence can access free and confidential counseling and advocacy services...” As such, **we respectfully request that you consider the following additions to allow for the participation of domestic violence agencies:**

- **Line 211 – add “and at least one community-based domestic violence agency” after “center”** – The only agencies funded by state and federal government to respond to IPV that either does not encompass or goes beyond sexual assault are local domestic violence agencies. To ensure that the community is able to meet the requirements of this section, local domestic violence agencies should be included in the MOU.

The following lines also address the inclusion of the local domestic violence agency in the MOU:

- **Line 215** – add “sexual assault” after “such”; add “and domestic violence agency” after “center”
- **Line 218** – add “sexual assault” after “such”; add “and domestic violence agency” after “center”

It is important to note that IPV is a form of domestic violence. While many may immediately identify domestic violence as something that occurs between married couples, abuse can realistically occur between all types of intimate partners. This includes violence among college-age young adults who are currently dating or who have recently been in a dating relationship. In fact, a national poll reports that 1 in 5 women report actual physical abuse, sexual abuse or threats of physical violence by their partner. While such violence may manifest itself in sexual assault (e.g., date rape), such violence can take many forms including physical, psychological, emotional, verbal or financial.

With regard to the definition of “intimate partner violence” found in the bill, **we respectfully request the following technical change be made to reference the correct definition of family violence in CT General Statutes:**

- **Line 48 – remove “domestic”; add “family” in front of “violence”; remove “46b-38h”; add “46b-38a” after “section”** – CT’s family violence definition includes violence between unrelated persons presently residing together or who have resided together; persons in, or who have

recently been in, a dating relationship; persons who have a child in common regardless of whether they are or have been married or lived together at any time.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, last fall CCADV partnered with the Injury Prevention Center at CT Children's Medical Center/Hartford Hospital to conduct a statewide needs assessment of college and university policies and procedures in regards to IPV. The assessment aims to describe current campus policies and procedures, awareness and prevention activities, and services available for victims of intimate partner violence. We will issue a report later this spring with key findings and recommendations for a model campus policy on IPV to help promote safer campus environments. **Preliminary survey results demonstrate that 75% of respondents (15 out of 20 respondents to date) would be interested in establishing a formal relationship with their local domestic violence agency.**

The federal Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization of 2013 (VAWA) extended the Jeanne Clery Act to include acts of domestic violence, dating violence and stalking to a list of major crimes that all U.S. colleges and universities participating in Title IV financial aid programs are required to report. It also requires these colleges and universities to create plans to prevent domestic violence and educate victims on their rights and resources. These requirements are effective as of March 7, 2014.

Again, we urge your support of this bill with the suggested substitute language. We look forward to working with the Committee on this important measure.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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